

## Queen Camel Parish Council

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### Minutes of the Extraordinary Parish Council Meeting held on Thursday 30<sup>th</sup> September 2021 at 7:30pm

#### Public Question Time

Immediately prior to the meeting members of the public were provided with the opportunity to speak. There were four members of the public in attendance. Questions and comments were:

- Why does the parish council feel it needs to do this and how will the council ensure that future parish councillors might not have other plans for the ground (for example for development)?
- This is a radical rather than evolutionary answer, the existing Playing Field Committee (PFC) could be reconstituted to suit.
- The Terms of Reference for the proposed Playing Field Management Committee (PFMC) says it will have six members, two of whom must be parish councillors. It would be a shame to lose some of the good committee members of the PFC (who have a committee of 9). To increase the number might be a good idea, at least during the transition.

**Present:** Councillors: Michael Baker, John Brendon, Sue Gettings (Chairperson), Kathy Grainger, Brian Hewlett, Phil Jones and Bryan Norman.

**Also present:** Parish Clerk and RFO, Elaine Owen

**E.01/09** **Apologies for Absence,**  
Councillor Rachael Malton due to another commitment and Councillor Dan Hewlett due to a clash of meetings.

**E.02/09** **Declarations of Interest**  
Phil Jones, Mike Jones, Sue Gettings, Kathy Grainger are on the Playing Field Committee

**E.03/09** **Correspondence (not included elsewhere in the Agenda)**  
None

**E.04/09** **Playing Field Management**

The lease between the Playing Field Committee (PFC) and Queen Camel Parish Council will expire on 31 December 2021. Phil Jones introduced his paper and emphasised that this was written as a lay person taking advice from Charity Commission and from research. The paper looked into three options:

1. The Playing Field to be managed by a sub-committee of the parish council called the Playing Field Management Committee (PFMC).
2. The parish council to set up a charity to manage the playing field (as sole trustee)
3. The parish council to reconsider renewing the lease to the PFC

If the lease is not renewed it means the charity must cease because the Scheme requires a lease for the charity to exist. It is clearly a matter for the Trustees of the charity to close it, and to dispose of the assets appropriately (many of which were originally funded by the parish council through grants), but the Parish Council needs to understand what is planned because of the need for continuity of services. Both parties agree that the playing field must be maintained so there should be ways to agree a solution.

The PFC must abide by advice of Charity Commission, but in principle there may be little problem because, under the provisions of the Charities Act 2011 (Section 298

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2011/25/section/298> there is a facility for trustees to transfer 'any property' to a Parish Council provided that the same services are then delivered by the latter.

It was noted that the parish council will only be able to agree matters relating to the land it owns, not the SCC land at the north of the playing field. It was also noted that the entire field is protected from development by having been registered as a 'Field in Trust' <https://www.fieldsintrust.org/>

The parish council would like the PFC to add an item to their next meeting agenda to ask if Members are in favour of the principle of passing assets to the parish council.

#### **a) Playing Field Management Committee (PFMC)**

The main task of the proposed PMFC will be to manage the day to day running of the playing field. This will be a similar task to that presently undertaken by the PFC. Draft terms of Reference (TOR) were supplied to the existing Playing Field Committee in May 2021.

One individual comment has been received (as above in public time). The PFC was not able to respond as a body before its annual meeting on 28<sup>th</sup> July and has also been waiting for confirmation that the parish council was set on this structure as opposed to the alternative options. It expects to respond after its next committee meeting later this month.

The meeting was closed a number of times to allow members of the public to contribute to the discussion. Comments given during these closed sessions included:

- The parish council must be careful not to make a proposal that might not be legal; although no specific issues had been identified.
- All issues relating to insurance must be resolved.
- The easy option would surely be to change the Scheme for the existing PFC.
- Both sides need more time to get this right.
- The TOR of the PFMC should include a commitment to keep it a playing field forever.

Discussion amongst councillors included the fact that although the parish council is happy that the playing field is well managed, the committee can be changed annually and there is no guarantee that the high standards will be maintained. A parish council is a stable body with villagers having a democratic sanction over how it is run.

The parish council would be in a better position than the PFC to obtain grants and needs to have control of the land in order to be able to take forward the development of the field as one piece of land (including land due to be made available under a S106 agreement and the area of land that belongs to Somerset County Council). It has already been determined that this aim is incompatible with any extension of the lease, or issuing a new lease.

It was accepted that clarification of ownership of assets may take a while and that insurance cover must be in place.

Under the Playing Field Management Committee option there are opportunities for the remit to be clarified and expanded. It is understood that existing volunteers enjoy working together as a group. Provided they wish to continue (and agreement can be reached on use of the assets, insurance and any training requirements that arise) there is no intention on the part of the parish council to outsource the work they do to contractors.

**It was RESOLVED that we form the Playing Field Management Committee in close consultation with the existing Playing Field Committee, so that the Terms of Reference and membership are acceptable to both parties**

Before this resolution could be moved to a vote it was necessary to establish who was permitted to vote as four councillors had declared an interest. The Clerk had taken prior advice on the matter and explained that it was considered in the interests of the inhabitants to allow those members to vote.

**For 5, Against 0, Abstained 2**

**b) Playing Field Development Committee (PFDC)**

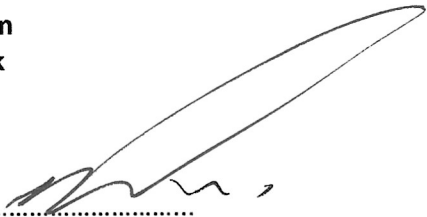
Development of the playing field is not part of the TOR for the PFMC so a new committee will be required to manage the future development of the playing field. It was felt that establishing continuity of service to the community should be addressed first. **This item was DEFERRED**

**c) Playing Field Charity (proposal for new Charity with Parish Council as sole trustee)**

The option of forming a new charity was not discussed in detail as it was not felt to offer any significant advantages.

**Elaine Owen  
Parish Clerk**

Signed .....



Date.....18.10.21.....